BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

ReadNow BC

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2008EDU0081-000955
June 20, 2008

Ministry of Education

HALQ'EMÉYLEM LANGUAGE TO REVITALIZE ABORIGINAL CULTURE

COQUITLAM – The language of the Upper Fraser First Nations, Halq'eméylem, is now a provincially approved second language curriculum, announced Education Minister Shirley Bond today, in honour of the upcoming National Aboriginal Day.

"With fewer and fewer remaining speakers of First Nations languages, many First Nations are in danger of losing this key part of their culture," said Bond. "The Province is working with school districts and First Nations to build strong language programs that will help First Nations students reconnect with their heritage through their school programs."

First Nations language curriculum development is led by school districts and local First Nations with the same process as other language courses such as German or Mandarin. The Halq'eméylem language integrated resource package has been developed as a curriculum for grades 5 to 12 by Seabird Island Community School in partnership with the Coqualeetza, Seabird, Chehalis and Sto:lô Shxweli First Nations and the Chilliwack and Gold Trail school districts.

"The development and implementation of the Halq'eméylem language curriculum will significantly contribute to the school's priority of preserving the First Nations' culture and the Halq'eméylem language," said Seabird Island community school principal Shari White.

Following local development of the language curriculum, the government reviews and approves the materials, making it available for use by any school in the province. Once approved, First Nations language courses are available to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. The Halq'eméylem curriculum is the tenth First Nations language curriculum to receive provincial approval.

"Capturing the Halq'eméylem language in a teachable system was a lot of hard, rewarding work," said Kwosel, Seabird Island Community School's Halq'eméylem teacher. "Three communities came together, building the IRP and strong relationships at the same time."

With 40 Aboriginal enhancement agreements now in place in school districts, the addition of provincially approved First Nations languages and the English 12 First Peoples course available to districts across B.C. by September 2008, the Province is working with B.C.'s Aboriginal communities and school districts to help Aboriginal students better connect with schools and improve achievement.

-more-

Additional provincial support for retaining and rebuilding First Nations languages includes the First Voices program, the BC Language Project and other programs delivered through the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Ministry of Attorney General, the New Relationship Trust and the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council.

-30-

Media contact: Public Affairs Bureau
Ministry of Education
250 356-5963

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.